

**Written Testimony of Kathy Murphy, RN, MSN of Wolcott, CT,
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Committee on Children,
February 21, 2013**

Testimony in Support of:
**HB 6332, AN ACT CONCERNING TOXIC FIRE RETARDANTS IN CHILDREN'S
PRODUCTS**

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and honorable members of the Committee on Children,

My name is Kathy Murphy and I reside in Wolcott, CT. I write in strong support of HB 6332 An Act Concerning Toxic Fire Retardants in Children's Products.

I am a mother of three children and a nurse with over 30 years of experience and a specialty focus in environmental health. I am an Associate Professor of Nursing at Naugatuck Valley Community College and an adjunct nursing clinical faculty member of the University of Connecticut and Yale School of Nursing. I also serve on the national Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments Education Workgroup and am a lead author of work incorporating environmental health into nursing curriculum. As a nurse, I am well aware of the growing body of evidence linking exposure to toxic chemicals with the rising incidence of many serious diseases, particularly in children, resulting in a lifelong burden of illness.

I am outraged that toxic flame retardants, known to be carcinogenic and mutagenic are found in so many children's products. These chemicals off-gas, get into the air and dust in our homes and are ingested or absorbed. Infants and young children have higher rates of exposure to chemicals due to their close proximity to products like changing pads, bassinet mattresses, nap mats and nursing pillows and frequent hand-mouth behavior.

In my practice, I see patients both young and old, battling serious cancers. While we may not know the exact cause of each type of cancer, we do know that more and more scientific research shows that exposure to toxic chemicals is linked with these diseases. The 2010 President's Cancer Panel Report states 41% of Americans will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their lives and determined that the true burden of environmentally induced cancer has been grossly underestimated.¹ Childhood cancer, particularly brain cancer and leukemia, has risen 20% in the last thirty years. Although we are doing a better job at reducing mortality, this trend is alarming. Cancer is now the 2nd leading cause of death for people under the age of 20!

I was shocked to learn that the chemical industry used deceitful practices to mount the case that these chemicals were necessary to save lives (see the Chicago Tribune series "Playing with Fire"). These chemicals have little to no fire-safety benefit and are known

¹ President's Cancer Panel Report Annual Report 2008-2009, "Reducing Environmental Cancer Risk-What We Can Do Now." (April 2010) (found in executive summary, letter to the President)

to cause harm. Why would we continue to use pounds of these chemicals in products that day after day increase the risk of harm to our most vulnerable?

There also needs to be concern for the first responders who arrive at these fires are breathing the toxic fumes over long periods of time, day in and day out, as they risk their own lives to save others. There can be consequences on the health not only to these first responders but to their children and future children as a result of this toxic exposure. Chemicals that provide little fire protection, and create a harmful toxic should not be used in commerce.

I applaud the Children's Committee for raising this important bill to protect children's health and I urge that it be passed this session.

Sincerely,

Kathy Murphy, RN, MSN
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